

Navigating Excellence in Physical Education: Insights and Suggestions of Teachers Towards an Improved PATH-Fit Implementation in Philippine Higher Education

Navegando por la excelencia en educación física: ideas y sugerencias de los profesores hacia una mejor implementación de PATH-Fit en la educación superior filipina

Navegant per l'excel·lència en educació física: idees i suggeriments dels professors cap a una implementació millorada de PATH-Fit a l'educació superior filipina

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ABSTRACT: This research investigates the insights and suggestions of teachers in implementing the reformed Physical Education (PE) program in the Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEI) called "Physical Activity Towards Health and Fitness" (PATH-Fit). Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, 14 participants were purposefully selected as the primary source of data. The main data-gathering tool was a series of in-depth interviews complemented by expert-validated guide questions. The study revealed six essential themes: the demand for continuous retooling activities, the prioritization of facilities and equipment, the amplification of PE's significance, the call to reduce paper and pen activities, the importance of seniors' support and guidance, and the need for clear learning references. These themes underscore the complex opportunities in implementing PATH-Fit, and it suggests that investing in continuous professional development, optimizing learning environments, and refining teaching approaches are crucial for the success of PE in higher education. The findings of this study contribute to an understanding of PATH-Fit implementation, which has implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to enhance the quality and effectiveness of PE in higher education programs in the country.

KEYWORDS: Improvement; opportunities; reform; tertiary education; threat

RESUMEN: Esta investigación investiga las ideas y sugerencias de los profesores en la implementación del programa reformado de Educación Física (EF) en las Instituciones de Educación Superior (IES) de Filipinas llamado "Actividad física hacia la salud y el fitness" (PATH-Fit). Empleando un enfoque descriptivo cualitativo, se seleccionaron intencionalmente 14 participantes como fuente principal de datos. La principal herramienta de recopilación de datos fue una serie de entrevistas en profundidad complementadas con preguntas guía validadas por expertos. El estudio reveló seis temas esenciales: la demanda de actividades continuas de reequipamiento, la priorización de instalaciones y equipos, la ampliación de la importancia de la educación física, el llamado a reducir las actividades con papel y bolígrafo, la importancia del apoyo y la orientación de las personas mayores, y la necesidad de unas políticas claras de aprendizaje. Estos temas subrayan las complejas oportunidades que ofrece la implementación de PATH-Fit y sugieren que invertir en

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desarrollo profesional continuo, optimizar los entornos de aprendizaje y perfeccionar los enfoques de enseñanza son cruciales para el éxito de la educación física en la educación superior. Los hallazgos de este estudio contribuyen a comprender la implementación de PATH-Fit, que tiene implicaciones para los educadores, administradores y formuladores de políticas que buscan mejorar la calidad y eficacia de la educación física en los programas de educación superior del país.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Mejora; oportunidades; reforma; educación terciaria; amenaza

RESUM: Aquesta investigació investiga les idees i els suggeriments dels professors per implementar el programa reformat d'Educació Física (PE) a les institucions d'educació superior (HEI) filipines anomenat "Activitat física cap a la salut i la forma física" (PATH-Fit). Utilitzant un enfocament descriptiu qualitatiu, 14 participants van ser seleccionats intencionadament com a font principal de dades. La principal eina de recollida de dades va ser una sèrie d'entrevistes en profunditat complementades amb preguntes de guia validades per experts. L'estudi va revelar sis temes essencials: la demanda d'activitats de reequipament contínues, la prioritització d'instal·lacions i equipaments, l'amplificació de la importància de l'educació física, la crida a reduir les activitats de paper i bolígraf, la importància del suport i l'orientació de la gent gran i la necessitat d'una claredat referents d'aprenentatge. Aquests temes subratllen les complexes oportunitats en la implementació de PATH-Fit i suggereixen que la inversió en el desenvolupament professional continu, l'optimització dels entorns d'aprenentatge i el perfeccionament dels enfocaments docents són crucials per a l'èxit de l'educació física a l'educació superior. Els resultats d'aquest estudi contribueixen a entendre la implementació de PATH-Fit, que té implicacions per als educadors, els administradors i els responsables polítics que busquen millorar la qualitat i l'eficàcia de l'educació física en els programes d'educació superior del país.

PARAULES CLAU: Millora; oportunitats; reforma; l'educació terciària; amenaça

Practitioner notes

What is already known about this topic

- PATH-Fit aims to provide a comprehensive and standardized curriculum for physical education in higher education institutions across the Philippines. This program is designed to align with contemporary educational needs, integrating physical fitness with the development of essential life skills to ensure holistic student growth and well-being.
- Despite its goals, the implementation of PATH-Fit has faced significant challenges. These include issues with curriculum adaptation, teacher training, and the overall readiness of institutions to embrace the new framework. Teachers and administrators often struggle with the shift from traditional methods to the innovative approaches proposed by PATH-Fit.
- There is a recognized need for continuous professional development and support for educators implementing PATH-Fit. Effective implementation requires that teachers not only understand the new curriculum but also receive adequate training and resources to adapt their teaching methods accordingly. This highlights the importance of ongoing mentorship, clear learning references, and robust support systems to facilitate a smooth transition.

What this paper adds

- The study highlighted the critical need for ongoing retooling and professional development for PE teachers. This finding underscores the importance of equipping educators with updated skills and knowledge to effectively deliver the reformed PE curriculum, addressing gaps in training and ensuring that teachers are well-prepared to meet the demands of PATH-Fit.
- A significant finding was the prioritization of facilities and equipment. The availability and quality of physical education facilities and resources directly impact the successful implementation of PATH-Fit. This suggests a need for investment in and upgrading of PE infrastructure to create conducive learning environments that support physical activities and health education.
- The study found a strong call to reduce paper and pen activities in PE classes. This reflects a shift towards more practical, hands-on learning experiences that align with the goals of PATH-Fit. By reducing traditional assessment methods, educators can focus more on experiential learning, which enhances student engagement and better promotes physical fitness and life skills.

(continued)

Implications for practice and/or policy

- Educational institutions should prioritize continuous professional development and retooling activities for PE teachers. This involves organizing regular training sessions, workshops, and seminars to update teachers on the latest pedagogical strategies, fitness trends, and curriculum innovations. By investing in teacher development, schools can ensure that educators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement PATH-Fit and adapt to its evolving requirements.
- There is a clear need for higher education institutions to invest in and upgrade their PE facilities and equipment. Providing modern, well-maintained, and adequate resources is essential for creating a supportive environment for physical education. This investment will not only facilitate effective teaching and learning but also encourage greater student participation and engagement in physical activities, thereby enhancing the overall quality of the PATH-Fit program.
- Schools should reduce reliance on traditional paper and pen activities and integrate more experiential, hands-on learning approaches in PE classes. This shift will better align with the goals of PATH-Fit by promoting physical literacy and practical knowledge. Teachers can employ various strategies such as active learning exercises, fitness challenges, and real-life applications of physical activities to foster a more dynamic and engaging PE curriculum that enhances students' physical and mental well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Philippine education system is a comprehensive framework designed to provide accessible and quality education to its citizens (Eduardo and Gabriel, 2021). It consists of various levels, including early childhood education, elementary education, secondary education, and higher education. Governed by the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the system aims to promote holistic development, instill values, and prepare learners for global citizenship (Hagos and Dejarme, 2008). With a blend of public and private institutions catering to diverse needs, the Philippine education system is characterized by a commitment to fostering critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning skills among its students (Tindowen et al., 2017).

At the core of the Philippine education system lies physical education (PE), an integral component dedicated to nurturing physical fitness, sportsmanship, and overall well-being among students across all levels. Embedded within the national educational framework, it reflects the country's dedication to fostering total development among learners. Mandated from primary to secondary levels, PE plays a vital role in promoting healthy lifestyles and instilling values of fairness and well-being (Habyarimana et al., 2022). With the major educational reforms done in the country's education history, DepEd ensures a comprehensive approach to health and wellness by mandating a diverse PE curriculum encompassing various physical activities, team sports, and fitness exercises (Cruz, 2022). Likewise, specialized programs in higher education accentuate ongoing efforts to adapt PE to contemporary educational needs, reflecting a dynamic response to evolving pedagogical demands (Zhang et al., 2018).

Over the years, the implementation of PE in Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEI) has encountered significant challenges (Panganiban, 2019). These encompass various issues, including curriculum implementation difficulties, inadequate teacher training, and a perceived lack of importance attributed to the subject, with its purpose often regarded as more political than cultural. This historical context suggests that the landscape of PE in higher education has been shaped by factors beyond mere pedagogical concerns (Cariaga, 2014). The scholarly dialogue surrounding these challenges underscores the necessity of a holistic approach to improvement.

Abbasov and Mavlyanov (2019) emphasize the pivotal role of increased resources, such as investments in human workforce development and school facilities, in enhancing PE's overall quality and effectiveness.

To address these significant challenges, the CHED took a proactive step by mandating all HEI to implement the new PE, also known as PATH-Fit, through the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) number 39, series of 2021. This represents a substantial reform in the setting of the PE in the country, aiming to offer a comprehensive and standardized curriculum in response to pressing issues identified in the field. PATH-Fit is designed to provide a structured framework that emphasizes physical fitness and the development of essential life skills and holistic growth. This initiative signifies a concerted effort by educational leaders to address the challenges faced in PE implementation, particularly the need for standardized teaching approaches and curriculum alignment with current educational needs. PATH-Fit introduces innovative approaches that have the potential to enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of PE in higher education, marking a significant step forward in the evolution of PE programs in the country (Peromingan et al., 2023).

PATH-Fit represents a transformative initiative aimed at reforming, redefining, and enhancing the PE in Philippine higher education. Its primary goal is to transcend traditional frameworks by offering a comprehensive program that not only emphasizes physical fitness but also integrates the development of essential life skills, addressing long-standing challenges in the field (Velez, 2023). The curriculum is designed to provide students with a well-rounded educational experience, prioritizing physical health, teamwork, communication, and whole growth. By aligning with present educational needs and introducing innovative approaches, PATH-Fit aims to elevate the quality and effectiveness of PE in higher education. This initiative is motivated by a recognition of the evolving demands of the educational landscape and a commitment to equipping graduates with the knowledge and skills necessary for personal well-being and active participation in society (Cimene et al., 2020).

However, since its implementation in 2021, the PATH-Fit program has faced numerous concerns, particularly in program implementation and curriculum content. One notable issue is the need for PE teachers to engage in continuous retooling activities to effectively navigate the innovative aspects of the PATH-Fit curriculum as educators have expressed difficulty adapting to the program's new teaching approaches, lessons, and assessments (Palomaria and Aquino, 2023). Concerns have also been raised about the availability and adequacy of learning facilities and equipment, impeding the smooth delivery of quality PE and the need for standardized teaching approaches, with educators emphasizing the importance of references to ensure program uniformity (Velez, 2023). Recent research in the Philippines has examined the implementation and impact of the new PE program as scholars have investigated the challenges encountered by educators and institutions during implementation, as well as the effectiveness of the curriculum in promoting physical fitness and overall well-being among tertiary students. Researchers have also assessed how well PATH-Fit aligns with the current educational landscape and the needs of today's students.

Despite the existing literature mentioned, there is a significant gap in studies investigating the insights and suggestions of teachers as they implement the new PE in higher education curricula. Little focus has been on understanding educators' perspectives, experiences, and concerns, which play an essential role in shaping the learning environment. Bridging this gap is critical to fully capture the realities and potential improvements that can inform policies, practices, and future developments in PE in higher education in the Philippines.

This study extends the current state of the art by examining the experiences of teachers within the context of these reform initiatives, shedding light on the insights and suggestions inherent in implementing innovative approaches to PE. By framing

the analysis within the broader discussion on innovation in this subject, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the curriculum reforms and underscores the importance of adaptive strategies in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of PE programs. These challenges resonate beyond national borders, as evidenced by similar issues in education systems worldwide. Recognizing the international impact, the study highlights the importance of developing relevant and adequate support processes to facilitate teachers' adaptation to curriculum changes.

Further, this research benefits teachers by addressing their needs, which can help them grow professionally, gain confidence, and be more effective in delivering the PATH-Fit program. The findings also can impact the quality of education that students receive, as understanding the insights and suggestions associated with implementing PATH-Fit can lead to changes that improve the overall learning experience.

Furthermore, understanding these aspects will enable the development of a more responsive, dynamic, and effective curriculum aligned with contemporary educational goals. This research can also help educational administrators understand the necessary support systems for teachers, as this knowledge can be used to guide resource allocation, policy development, and strategic planning to ensure success in PATH-Fit implementation. This research will benefit the entire PE community by contributing to the ongoing discussion about the future of PE in higher education in the Philippines and laying the groundwork for further studies and similar investigations. The identified themes and challenges will provide potential avenues for further research, allowing future researchers to build on this work and contribute to the country's evolving field of higher education.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design, specifically the interpretative phenomenological analysis, to investigate the insights and suggestions of PE teachers regarding implementing the PATH-Fit program. Qualitative research aims to explore and understand the complexities of social phenomena by capturing the varieties and context of human experiences (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Qualitative research seeks to uncover underlying meanings, patterns, and perspectives that contribute to a more complete understanding of a subject (Creswell and Clark, 2004).

Further, interpretative phenomenological analysis is a qualitative research methodology that explores and understands individuals' experiences. It involves an in-depth examination of how people make sense of their personal experiences and the meanings they attach to them (Smith, 2011). This approach aims to uncover participants' subjective perspectives and interpretations through a detailed analysis of their narratives, focusing on themes, patterns, and underlying meanings (Larkin et al., 2019). This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding each participant's unique context and subjective reality, allowing researchers to gain insight into complex human experiences and phenomena (Eatough and Smith, 2017).

This design is appropriate for this research as it focuses on understanding individuals' experiences and perspectives, aligning with the study's aim to explore teachers' insights and suggestions in implementing the reformed PE curriculum. This qualitative approach allows for a deep exploration of the subjective meanings and interpretations teachers attach to their experiences, providing rich insights into the complexities of their perspectives.

2.2. Research Procedures

The research procedures commenced with obtaining informed consent from the participants, ensuring their voluntary participation, and understanding the study's

objectives. Participants engaged in individual in-depth interviews. Each interview session ranged from approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, allowing in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives. The interviews were conducted by the researcher, who has undergone extensive training in interviews as part of qualitative research methodologies and has a track record of publishing numerous articles in reputable databases employing qualitative research designs. The questions were intentionally crafted in an open-ended format to encourage participants to express their perspectives freely and provide detailed insights into their experiences and perceptions.

During the interviews, the researcher ensured a safe and private environment, emphasizing the confidentiality and anonymity of participants' responses. Measures were implemented to safeguard the data, including using pseudonyms and de-identifying sensitive information during transcription. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored securely on password-protected devices, accessible only to the researcher.

2.3. Research Participants and Sampling Procedure

A total of 14 research participants were selected using a purposeful sampling technique, aligning with the specific criteria outlined to meet the research objectives (Kalu, 2019). Participants were chosen based on their employment in a higher education institution, current involvement in teaching PATH-Fit courses, and at least two years of experience teaching the subject. This targeted approach ensured that the insights gathered were from educators with firsthand experience implementing the program, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter grounded in practical teaching experiences. The information on the demographic characteristics of the participants is described below:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

Characteristics	Frequency (N=14)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	7	50.0
Female	7	50.0
Age		
21-25 Years Old	2	14.0
26-30 Years Old	4	29.0
31-35 Years Old	4	29.0
36-40 Years Old	2	14.0
41 Years Old – Above	2	14.0
Level of Education:		
With Ongoing Master's Units	5	36.0
Master's Degree Holder	6	43.0
With Ongoing Doctorate Units	3	21.0

2.4. Research Instrument and Materials

This study's primary data collection tool was a series of in-depth interviews using a carefully constructed list of guide questions to elicit the perspectives, experiences, and insights of the 14 research participants. PE and qualitative research experts thoroughly reviewed and assessed the questions, contributing to the instrument's refinement. This expert validation process aimed to improve the collected data's quality and ensure the guide questions' validity, reliability, and acceptability.

In addition, this research used a set of necessary materials to aid in data collection, such as voice recorders, cameras, and notepads. Voice recorders were used to capture detailed verbal responses during interviews, ensuring accuracy in transcription and subsequent qualitative data analysis. Cameras were used to record any relevant visual information that could supplement or enhance the participants' experiences, and notepads were used as an additional means for researchers to record immediate impressions and contextual details during data collection sessions.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data analysis and interpretation in this study adhered to the framework established by [Miles and Huberman \(1994\)](#), encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Initially, extensive qualitative data from interviews underwent systematic transcribing and refinement during data reduction, aimed at condensing, selecting, and simplifying information without compromising its essence. Raw data transcriptions were meticulously reviewed to identify key themes, patterns, and recurring elements pertinent to the study's objectives. This resulted in a refined dataset that preserved the richness of participants' responses.

Subsequently, the study progressed to data display, where transcribed data were visually presented using charts and tables to facilitate comprehensive understanding and synthesis of qualitative data. This visualization aided in identifying patterns, relationships, and variations in participants' experiences using a manual coding approach with no software involvements. Finally, drawing and verifying conclusions involved deriving meaningful interpretations and insights from the condensed and visually presented data, ensuring accuracy through a comprehensive verification process. In this phase, triangulation was employed through the convergence of multiple data sources, reinforcing the credibility and reliability of the findings. Debriefing sessions with subject matter experts was also done to enhance the findings' credibility and integrity.

3. RESULTS

To generate the themes, the researcher conducted a thorough data analysis following the framework proposed by [Miles and Huberman \(1994\)](#). Initially, the raw data, comprising transcripts of interviews underwent data reduction, where the researcher condensed the information into manageable units for analysis. This involved systematically identifying key phrases, quotes, and text segments that encapsulated the essence of participants' responses.

Subsequently, the condensed data were subjected to data display techniques, such as manual thematic coding or organizing the data into charts and tables. This process facilitated the identification of patterns, connections, and recurring themes across the dataset.

Further, the core ideas extracted from participants' responses were the foundation for the identified themes. These core ideas, often represented by interview excerpts, functioned as supporting evidence for each theme. By aligning participants' words with the essential themes, the researcher ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the experiences and perspectives of the participants. This approach enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, as the participants' voices directly supported the themes. Incorporating participants' responses as support for the themes added depth and richness to the analysis, providing concrete examples and illustrations that explained the meaning and significance of each theme.

Table 2. Insights and Suggestions of Teachers in Philippine Higher Education Towards an Improved PATH-Fit Implementation

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Retool PE Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have no exposure to the subject so much I suggest having workshops or seminars for PATH-Fit courses We should have seminars or workshops that specifically focus on PATH-Fit courses
Prioritize Facilities and Equipment for PATH-Fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school should provide the necessary equipment and facilities Complete facilities and equipment can help students to have hands-on experiences Institutions should provide the necessary resources, equipment, and facilities for students
Amplify the Significance of PE in an Academic Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students nowadays don't realize that PE has exceptional cases in terms of instruction Students underestimate PE Students overlook the unique aspects of PE
Lesser Paper and Pen Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many paper-and-pencil activities don't seem suitable for PE Students are doing more written work than physical activities in PATH-Fit
Intensify Seniors' Support and Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New teachers need support and guidance from senior teachers Teachers need guidance from more experienced seniors who are experts in the field There should be meetings among the teachers
Clear Learning References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's essential to have a well-organized syllabus Leaders should ideally provide teachers with organized materials to ensure clarity PATH-Fit content should be informed to avoid confusion

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Theme 1: Retool PE Teachers

This theme delves into the pressing need among PE teachers for comprehensive retooling activities tailored to the PATH-Fit implementation requirements. According to the participants' responses, they are dealing with the challenges posed by the reformed PE in higher education, which stem from the novel nature of the lessons, activities, assessments, and approaches incorporated into this educational framework. Their demand for retooling initiatives starts from a desire for standardization or uniformity in their teaching methodologies. Because of the unfamiliarity with the new aspects of the program, there is an urgent need for structured support mechanisms that can assist teachers in aligning their instructional techniques with the complexities of PATH-Fit. Educators hope to streamline their teaching approaches by providing the necessary retooling activities and fostering consistency and coherence in lesson delivery, as evidenced by their responses below:

"...since PATH-Fit is entirely new to us, we have no exposure to the subject so much. So, I suggest having workshops or seminars for PATH-Fit courses. This would help standardize our approach to PATH-Fit with other institutions and improve the delivery and instruction of PATH-Fit..." – P13

"...it would be great if we could have seminars or workshops that specifically focus on the different areas of the PATH-Fit courses." – P11

Further, pursuing standardized teaching methods is more than just an organizational endeavor, as it can significantly boost teachers' confidence. Educators will likely feel more confident in their instructional abilities as they gain proficiency in their teaching subjects. The theme also emphasizes the mutual relationship between retooling initiatives and the effectiveness of PE in higher education as the emphasis on standardized teaching approaches not only addresses the challenges that educators face but also guarantees to improve the quality of the learning journey for students, resulting in a more effective and rewarding PE experience.

Furthermore, education, including PE, is constantly evolving because of advances in pedagogical theories, technology, and societal changes. Hence, frequent retooling allows educators to stay proactive in these transformations, ensuring that their teaching methodologies remain relevant and effective (Kulshrestha and Pandey, 2013). Initiatives like these will ensure that the tools and strategies are aligned with their goals and expectations (Matuk et al., 2016), and they can potentially improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching, thereby improving student learning. It also has the potential to improve teachers' knowledge, particularly when combined with teacher training activities (de Sousa et al., 2020), and can help with the organizational learning required to implement change in teacher education. Designing retooling activities for teachers is essential for their professional development and the overall improvement of the educational system (Anagnostopoulos et al., 2018).

4.2. Theme 2: Prioritize Facilities and Equipment for PATH-Fit

This theme is centered on teachers' suggestions to prioritize investment in facilities and equipment for the smooth implementation of PATH-Fit. The research participants' insights focus on the negative impact of inadequate learning facilities on the effective delivery of quality PE, influencing students' overall learning experiences and appreciation of the subject. Teachers emphasize the importance of students engaging in firsthand experiences rather than relying solely on descriptive explanations of these essential tools within the PATH-Fit framework, highlighting the critical need for prioritizing the acquisition and accessibility of facilities and equipment. Teachers agree that improving the learning environment through prioritizing facilities and equipment addresses existing challenges and paves the way for an enhanced educational experience, fostering a deeper understanding and engagement with the PATH-Fit curriculum. Based on the research participants:

"...for PATH-Fit courses, it would be great if the school could provide the necessary equipment and facilities. This way, students can have hands-on experiences with various sports and activities rather than just hearing about them." – P10

"The institutions should prioritize providing the necessary resources, particularly equipment, and suitable facilities for students' learning..." – P14

"...as for facilities, we don't have a gymnasium, and there's no outdoor area for activities. We are limited to using classrooms, which are not spacious, so we end up assigning more written activities to the students because there's no room for physical activities..." – P7

This theme implies that the compelling recommendation from educators emphasizes these resources' critical role in providing high-quality PE. Participants' insights highlight the vital impact of inadequate learning facilities on effective instruction delivery and students' overall learning experiences, directly influencing their appreciation of the subject matter. Adequate facilities and equipment are critical because they directly influence the quality and effectiveness of the learning experience. PE is

inherently practical in requiring students to participate in various physical activities to develop motor skills, fitness, and overall well-being. Access to appropriate facilities, such as sports fields, gymnasiums, and specialized equipment, fosters a hands-on learning environment, allowing students to apply theoretical concepts in real-world settings.

This theme is congruent with the findings of [Ananomo et al. \(2020\)](#), who discusses that adequate facilities and equipment in PE are crucial for the quality of teaching and learning. The maintenance of these resources is equally important, with administrative policy, finance, and teacher aptitude playing critical roles in the educational process. The condition and quality of sports infrastructure in schools can impact the learning process, with a need for optimization and standardization ([Irawan and Prasetyo, 2019](#)). Therefore, ensuring the availability and proper maintenance of facilities and equipment in PE is essential for effective teaching and learning. Moreover, equipped facilities improve the safety and efficiency of physical activities and enable a wide range of exercises that cater to individual needs and abilities. Adequate facilities and equipment are more than just logistical requirements; they are foundational elements that foster a positive attitude toward physical activity, promote skill development, and contribute to student's holistic growth and lifelong well-being.

4.3. Theme 3: Amplify the Significance of PE in an Academic Curriculum

Insights from research participants highlight the critical role of teachers as designers and facilitators of learning in this realization of the importance of PE within the school curriculum. In today's academic environment, students need to see PE as more than just a required subject to fulfil attendance requirements; it is an intrinsic and valuable component of their educational journey. As educational guides, teachers play an essential role in changing this perception. They instill in students the understanding that PE contributes to holistic development, mental well-being, and the acquisition of life skills and physical fitness. Encouraging students to see PE as an integral part of their educational pursuits rather than just a requirement will pave the way for cultivating a mindset that recognizes the long-term benefits of a well-rounded education. To wit:

"...students underestimate PE. They don't realize that PE has special cases in terms of instruction, activities, and exam guidelines. These aspects aren't as clearly defined as in general education subjects, where it's mostly classroom based. This can lead to overlooking the unique aspects of PE." – P8

This theme implies that PE is critical in addressing students' overall development beyond the traditional emphasis on physical fitness. In an era of sedentary lifestyles and increased screen time, PE is a cornerstone for encouraging regular physical activity, combating health issues, and instilling lifelong habits for overall well-being. Furthermore, PE allows for social interaction, teamwork, and essential life skills such as communication and leadership. Recognizing and appreciating PE in the school curriculum promotes a healthy lifestyle and fosters a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between physical and mental health, resulting in well-rounded individuals capable of success in academic and life pursuits.

In the current educational landscape, the significance of PE exceeds traditional notions, now strengthened by insights from neuroscience and neuroeducation that underscore its pivotal role in promoting mental and social well-being and enhancing academic performance ([Serice, 2022](#)). [Li \(2020\)](#) reinforces this perspective by highlighting the direct correlation between the quality of PE programs and students'

physical fitness and mental health, which are integral to their overall learning experience. PE is a cornerstone for developing practical knowledge, providing a compelling intrinsic rationale for its inclusion in the curriculum. Complementing this, [Chelnokova et al. \(2018\)](#) emphasize cultivating a genuine appreciation for physical culture and sports among students through fostering a conscious appreciation for physical exercise and enhancing socio-cultural status.

4.4. Theme 4: Lesser Paper and Pen Activities

This theme delves into a noteworthy suggestion by PE teachers advocating for fewer paper and pen activities in the PATH-Fit curriculum. Their viewpoint is based on the belief that PE should provide a dedicated space for active engagement, recreation, and a break from the stress caused by demanding schedules and academic workloads. The research participants' insights highlight concerns about specific chapters in PATH-Fit that rely heavily on lectures and traditional pen-and-paper exercises, which deviate from the essence and goal of PE. As articulated by the participants, the primary purpose of PE is to provide a platform for students' holistic growth through movement education, emphasizing the need for a curriculum recalibration to align more seamlessly with the dynamic, experiential nature inherent in PE. As research participants have expressed:

“... there's a significant focus on discussions and many paper-and-pencil activities, which don't seem suitable for a PE subject.” – P2

“Chapters one and two primarily involve discussions and these activity types, which don't include physical exercises. Students have asked, ‘Sir, aren't we in a PE class? Why are our activities mostly on paper?’ Instead of doing physical activities, the students do more written work.” – P9

This theme implies that the teachers' viewpoints represent a fundamental shift in pedagogical approach as it reveals concerns about aspects of PATH-Fit that heavily emphasize traditional teaching methods, deviating from the essence of PE. This infers a transformative reevaluation of teaching methods and curriculum design, indicating a shift toward a more student-centered, engaging, and holistic approach that improves learning outcomes and aligns with PE's broader goals of fostering holistic growth and well-being.

With the principles of embodied learning and the theory of enactivism, these perspectives emphasize the importance of active engagement with the environment and the body's role in shaping cognition and learning. As highlighted by [Herold and Waring \(2017\)](#), there is a growing recognition of the need to reduce paper and pen activities in PE, aligning with the shift towards practical knowledge acquisition and promoting physical literacy ([Giblin et al., 2017](#)). This shift necessitates a more hands-on approach to learning, which traditional paper and pen activities may hinder. [Westlund Stewart et al. \(2015\)](#) underscore the importance of active, experiential learning in the subject. By reducing paper and pen activities, educators can better align with these pedagogical shifts, fostering a more engaging and practical learning experience in PE.

4.5. Theme 5: Intensify Seniors' Support and Guidance

This theme emphasizes research participants' perspectives on the importance of senior faculty members' unwavering support and guidance in successfully implementing the new PE in higher education curriculum. There are areas that novice teachers have yet to fully comprehend, which is especially important as they navigate the complexities of the teaching profession. Support and guidance from experienced

faculty members can take many forms, including regular meetings, consultations, and informal discussions. While these interactions may appear ordinary, they are profoundly important to novice teachers, providing valuable insights, mentorship, and camaraderie on their professional journey. These insignificant gestures contribute significantly to the development and confidence of emerging educators by creating a supportive environment. As the research participants said:

“...we also need support from senior teachers, especially regarding guidance. As novice teachers, we may not always know how to handle certain situations. We still need guidance from our more experienced seniors, who are experts in the field...” – P1

“...there should also be meetings among the teachers who teach these courses to ensure uniformity in our programs and activities.” – P6

For new PE teachers exploring the teaching profession, the consistent support and guidance of senior faculty members and leaders is critical. In translating theoretical knowledge into effective classroom practices, novice educators frequently face challenges and uncertainties; that is why mentorship and support from more experienced colleagues will provide invaluable insights, strategies, and camaraderie which are all essential for professional growth. Senior faculty members act as mentors, imparting wisdom gained through years of experience, assisting in decision-making, and providing constructive feedback. This consistent support accelerates novice teachers' learning curves and boosts their confidence and resilience in facing challenges. It also promotes a positive and collaborative culture within the educational institution, encouraging a shared commitment to the continuous improvement of PE instruction and, as a result, enriching students' overall learning experience.

This finding parallels the study of [Squires \(2019\)](#), which emphasizes the importance of a structured support system, with mentors playing an essential role in assisting new teachers in establishing themselves within the school. [Whalen et al. \(2019\)](#) emphasizes the value of experienced teacher mentors in helping new teachers as they navigate the challenges of their first year, while [Schwan et al. \(2020\)](#) emphasize the positive impact of mentor experience, time spent with a mentor, and the quality of mentor interactions on new teachers' self-efficacy and reflection. [Etzkorn and Braddock \(2020\)](#) add that the attitudes of school leaders, who frequently choose senior faculty members as mentors, can significantly impact the mentorship's effectiveness. Senior faculty members and experts' support and mentoring of new teachers is critical for their successful integration into the teaching profession.

4.6. Theme 6: Clear Learning References

This theme emphasizes the teachers' suggestions, emphasizing the importance of clear and well-organized learning references in the new PE in higher education. According to research participants, structured references, including comprehensive syllabi, are vital because they are indispensable tools for refining teaching methodologies and tracking progress within specified timeframes. While teachers may address challenges encountered during PATH-Fit implementation, consistency in program delivery becomes critical, and having clear learning references is vital to achieving this consistency, as they provide a standardized foundation for the PE in higher education. These references not only help educators maintain consistency, but they also contribute to a more systematic and efficient approach to PATH-Fit delivery, ultimately improving the overall quality of the educational experience for both teachers and students as evidenced by the responses of the research participants:

“... it’s essential to have a well-organized syllabus, a structured way of teaching, and monitoring logs that need to be addressed within a specific timeframe. Our leaders should ideally provide us with organized materials such as syllabi, to ensure clarity, and our content should be consistent to avoid confusion.” – P3

“...sometimes, there’s uncertainty, and we must devise ways to deliver the content because what’s given to us isn’t properly conceptualized. It seems like it’s taken directly from the book without any organization. This leads to confusion because PE has various branches...” – P5

“... we should have clear learning references so we can have a unified approach to the delivery of topics to the students, ensuring that we are all on the same page in terms of what PATH-Fit is and what should be done for PATH-Fit.” – P11

In PE, having clear and well-crafted learning materials is critical for fostering effective teaching and maximizing student learning outcomes. These materials, which include structured lesson plans, comprehensive syllabi, and engaging resources, serve as a road map for educators to consistently organize, present, and assess content. Clear learning materials assist teachers in managing their lessons and contribute to standardizing instructional approaches, ensuring a consistent learning experience for all students.

This idea is supported by the findings of [Quennerstedt \(2013\)](#), which emphasizes the development of practical knowledge, which can be enhanced by using references to support and expand on the material being taught. [Redelius et al. \(2015\)](#) emphasize the importance of setting specific goals that can be reinforced with relevant literature and research references. [Pill and SueSee \(2017\)](#) emphasize the importance of critical thinking in PE, with references used to stimulate and support this cognitive process. Clear references in PE boost the credibility of the taught content and lay the groundwork for practical knowledge, goal-setting, and critical thinking.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study delves into crucial themes, highlighting the insights and suggestions for implementing the new PE in Philippine higher education. The themes, which range from the need for ongoing teacher retooling to the importance of prioritizing facilities and equipment, reveal complex insights beyond immediate concerns and have extensive implications for the educational landscape.

Hence, this study concludes that teachers’ demand for retooling activities reflects the fluid nature of educational frameworks, especially when confronted with reforms in the curricula such as PATH-Fit. It reveals educators’ desire for standardization and uniformity in teaching methodologies, indicating a desire for more cohesive and effective program delivery. The call to prioritize facilities and equipment also reveals an essential aspect of the learning environment, with insufficient resources as a barrier to providing quality PE.

Further, this study concludes that teachers play a critical role in reshaping students’ perceptions, especially in cultivating an appreciation of PE. This goes beyond meeting mandatory requirements but emphasizes the subject’s transformative potential in contributing to student’s holistic development and well-being. The call for fewer paper and pen activities within PATH-Fit also aligns with current educational philosophies that promote experiential learning and active engagement as it suggests recalibrating teaching methods to reflect the dynamic, experiential nature of PE, resulting in a more immersive and impactful learning experience for both teachers and students.

Furthermore, this study concludes the importance of senior support and clear learning references in PE success. It emphasizes the significance of mentorship and guidance in helping teachers overcome professional challenges and the necessity of well-structured learning materials to ensure consistency and effectiveness in program delivery.

Moreover, this study concludes that the successful implementation of PATH-Fit requires continuous and joint efforts as it requires ongoing support and guidance for educators, a conducive learning environment, and a curriculum that faultlessly aligns with the goals of PE. This goes beyond the immediate challenges discussed in each theme, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how these elements interact to shape the future of PE in higher education. As educators, administrators, and policymakers consider the study's findings and recommendations, they are encouraged to adopt a holistic perspective that goes beyond the superficial challenges, fostering an environment where PATH-Fit can thrive so students can experience a transformative educational journey.

6. LIMITATIONS

The study's focus on a specific group of teachers within the Philippine context may limit the generalizability of findings to other educational settings or cultural contexts. Future research endeavors could benefit from expanding the sample size to include a more diverse range of participants, such as administrators, students, and parents, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the program's impact.

Further, longitudinal studies could be conducted to assess the long-term effects of the PATH-Fit program on student outcomes and teacher practices. Comparative studies across different educational systems could provide valuable insights into the transferability of strategies for curriculum implementation and teacher support.

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